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CHANUKAH

**IT'S DARK OUT THERE?
LOOK AGAIN.**

*Chanukah Celebrates the Quest for
Light. Leave the Speeches for Later.*

Holiday Overview Chanukah

Chanukah—the eight-day festival of light that begins on the eve of the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, of purity over adulteration, and of spirituality over materialism.

More than twenty-one centuries ago, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who sought to forcefully Hellenize the people of Israel. Against all odds, a small band of faithful Jews defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, drove the Greeks from the land, reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to the service of G-d. When they sought to light the Temple's *menorah* (the seven-branched candelabrum), they found only a single cruse of olive oil that had escaped

contamination by the Greeks; miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days, until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity. To commemorate and publicize these miracles, the sages instituted the festival of Chanukah. At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah (candelabrum) lighting: a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening, and so on till the eighth night of Chanukah, when all eight lights are kindled.

On Chanukah we also add Hallel and *Ve'al Hanisim* in our daily prayers to offer praise and thanksgiving to G-d for “delivering the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few . . . the wicked into the hands of the righteous.”

Chanukah customs include eating foods fried in oil—latkes (potato pancakes) and *sufganiot* (doughnuts), playing with the dreidel (a spinning top on which are inscribed the Hebrew letters *nun*, *gimel*, *hei*, and *shin*—an acronym for “*Nes gadol hayah sham*—a great miracle happened there”), and the giving of Chanukah *gelt*—gifts of money—to children.

Holiday Overview

Chanukah



For Chanukah there is
no *Megillah* reading.

Why?

TEXT

1

*SIDDUR TEHILLAT
HASHEM,
ANNOTATED
EDITION
(BROOKLYN, N.Y.:
KEHOT, 2002), PP.
51–52*

In the days of Mattathias, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean, and his sons, when the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will.

But You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress. You waged their battles, defended their rights, and avenged the wrong done to them. You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton sinners into the hands of those who occupy themselves with Your Torah.

וְעַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַפְּרָקָן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת שְׁעָשִׂיתָ
לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ, בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה.

בְּיָמֵי מַתְתִּיָּהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל
חֲשֵׁמוֹנָאִי וּבְנָיו, כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן
הַרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְהַשְׁפִּיחַם
תּוֹרָתְךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנְךָ,
וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם
בְּעֵת צָרָתָם, רַבֵּת אֶת רִיבָם, וְדָנְתָּ אֶת
דִּינָם, נִקְמָת אֶת נִקְמָתָם. מְסֻרֵת
גְּבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים, וְרַבִּים בְּיַד
מְעֻטִים, וְטִמְאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים,
וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים, וְזָדִים בְּיַד
עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרָתְךָ,

TEXT

1

*SIDDUR TEHILLAT
HASHEM,
ANNOTATED
EDITION
(BROOKLYN, N.Y.:
KEHOT, 2002), PP.
51–52*

You made a great and holy name for Yourself in Your world, and effected a great deliverance and redemption for Your people Israel to this very day.

Then Your children entered the shrine of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courtyards, and instituted these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great name.

וְלָךְ עָשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל וְקְדוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָמְךָ,
וְלַעֲמֶךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְּדוֹלָה
וּפְרָקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

וְאַחַר כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּנֵיךָ לְדַבֵּיר בֵּיתְךָ, וּפְנוּ
אֶת הַיְכָלְךָ וְטָהְרוּ אֶת מִקְדָּשְׁךָ,
וְהִדְלִיקוּ נֵרוֹת בְּחִצְרוֹת קִדְשֶׁךָ, וְקִבְּעוּ
שְׂמוֹנֶת יְמֵי חֲנֻכָּה אֱלוֹ לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל
לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל.

TEXT

2

MAIMONIDES,
MISHNEH
TORAH, LAWS OF
PRAYER 1:6

The evening prayer is not obligatory, as are the morning and afternoon prayers. Nevertheless, Jewish people in all places are accustomed to reciting the evening prayer and have accepted it upon themselves as obligatory.

וְאִין תְּפִלַּת עֶרְבֵית חוּבָה
כְּתִפְלַת שַׁחֲרִית וּמִנְחָה.
וְאִף עַל פִּי כֵן נִהְגוּ כֻּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל מְקוֹמוֹת
מוֹשְׁבוֹתֵיהֶם לְהִתְפַּלֵּל
עֶרְבֵית, וְקִבְּלוּהָ עֲלֵיהֶם
כְּתִפְלַת חוּבָה.

TEXT

3

MAIMONIDES,
MISHNEH
TORAH, LAWS OF
CHANUKAH 4:12

The mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lamps is very dear. One should be very careful in its observance to publicize the miracle and thus increase our praise of G-d and our gratitude for the miracles that He performed for us.

מִצְוַת נֵר חֲנֻכָּה מְצֻוָּה
חֲבִיבָה הִיא עַד מְאֹד.
וְצָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהַזְהֵר בָּהּ
כְּדִי לְהוֹדִיעַ הַנֶּס
וּלְהוֹסִיף בְּשִׁבְחַת הָאֱ-ל
וְהוֹדָתָהּ לוֹ עַל הַנִּסִּים
שֶׁעָשָׂה לָנוּ.



Verbalizing gratitude
Purim and other holidays



Lighting candles
Chanukah

Question #1

Why is Chanukah celebrated differently?

Why do we leave the storytelling to candles, which we can't hear anyway?



TEXT 4

TALMUD
TRACTATE
SOFERIM, §20

[After kindling the Chanukah lamps] one proclaims: “We kindle these lamps to commemorate the saving acts, the miracles, and the wonders.”

ואומר: הנרות האלו אנו
מדליקין, על הישועות ועל
הניסים ועל הנפלאות.

What are the candles saying?



A.
Saving
acts



B.
Miracles



C.
Wonders



D.
Wondrous
events

TEXT 5

BOOK OF THE
MACCABEES 1:2

The king's officers arrived in the city of Modiin to compel the people to turn against G-d's Torah and to offer sacrifices to the idols. Many Jews assembled and Mattathias and his sons girded themselves.

The king's officers said to Mattathias, "You are revered and respected by your people; you have many children and a large family. Therefore, be the first to approach the altar and fulfill the king's decree as is done throughout the kingdom and among the population of Judea and Jerusalem. This will curry favor with the king, and you will be rewarded with gold, silver, and precious gifts".

Mattathias raised a powerful voice in reply: "Although all the nations under the king's dominion obey the king and betray the statutes of their heritage, my sons and I will, nevertheless, not verge even an iota from our ancestors' statutes. We will never forsake G-d's

laws and annul His covenant with us, Heaven forbid. We will, therefore, never obey the king's demand that we betray our statutes".

When he concluded, a Jewish man stepped up to the altar in Modiin to offer a sacrifice before all as the king had decreed. Mattathias saw this and was inflamed with passion and zeal. He attacked the man in a fury and slayed him at the foot of the altar. He also slayed the king's officer and destroyed the altar. Thus, he dealt zealously to protect G-d's law as Pinchas had once done to Zimri the son of Salu.

He rushed into the city and called out loudly, "Those who tremble before G-d's law and maintain the covenant, follow me." He and his sons fled into the mountains of the [Judean] desert and left all their possessions in the city. Those to whom G-d's Torah was dear followed them and fled into the desert.

TEXT 6A

MEGILAT
ANTIOCHUS 43–
46

Bagris the wicked boarded a ship and fled to King Antiochus, and with him were those who had escaped the battle. Bagris said to Antiochus, “Though the king commanded the Jews to cease observing the Sabbath, the new moon [festival], and circumcision, they defrauded you and rebelled against you. However, the combined armies of all the nations in the world could not conquer the five sons of Mattathias. They are mightier than lions, swifter than eagles, and fiercer than bears. Your majesty, I advise you not to send a small army or you will be shamed before all the kings. Rather, draft every officer in your kingdom without exception along with their armored elephants.”

This suggestion found favor with Antiochus, who raised a powerful army from all the provinces of his kingdom. The governors of each province appeared [with their footmen] and armored elephants.

אז בגריס הרשע נכנס בספינה אחת וינס אל
אנטיוכס המלך, ועמו אנשים פליטי חרב. ויען
בגריס ויאמר לאנטיוכס המלך: אתה המלך
שמת צווי לבטל מן היהודים שבת, ראש
חדש, ומילה, מרמה גדולה ומרד בתוכה.
אשר אם ילכו כל העמים והאמות והלשונות
לא יוכלו לחמשה בני מתתיהו, מאריות הם
חזקים, ומנשרים הם קלים, ומדבים הם
ממהרים. עתה המלך עצתי תיטב עליך ולא
תלחם באנשים מעט, כי אם תלחם בהם
ותבוש בעיני כל המלכים. לכן כתוב ושלח
ספרים בכל מדינות מלכותך ויבאו שרי
החילות ולא ישאר מהם אחד, וגם פילים
מלבשים שריונים יהיו עמם.

וייטב הדבר בעיני אנטיוכס המלך, וישלח
ספרים לכל מדינות מלכותו, ויבאו שרי כל
העמים והממלכות, וגם פילים מלבשים
שריונים עמם באו.

TEXT 6B

MEGILAT
ANTIOCHUS 57–
62

After this, Mattathias's five sons went forth and fought the many armies and killed many of them. But [their oldest brother] Yehudah died in this battle. When they saw that their brother had been killed, the brothers returned to their father. Mattathias asked, "Why did you return?" They replied, "Our brother, our collective equal, was slain."

Mattathias replied, "I will go with you and fight the enemy lest the House of Israel perish when they perceive your alarm over your brother's death." Mattathias went out and fought alongside his sons. The Heavenly G-d delivered the enemy's mighty warriors to them, of whom many were slain. Of the sword-wielding warriors, archers, officers, and deputies, none remained. The surviving remnants fled to distant lands.

עַל זֶה יֵצְאוּ חֲמִשָּׁה בְּנֵי מַתְתִּיָּה בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה,
וַיִּלְחֲמוּ בְּעַמִּים וַיְהַרְגוּ בָּהֶם הָרַג רַב, וַיְהַרְג
מֵהֶם יְהוּדָה. בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה, כְּאֲשֶׁר רָאוּ בְּנֵי
מַתְתִּיָּה כִּי נִהְרַג יְהוּדָה, שָׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל
אֲבֵיהֶם, וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם: לָמָּה שָׁבַבְתֶּם? וַיַּעֲנוּ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ: עַל אֲשֶׁר נִהְרַג אַחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר הָיָה
חָשׁוּב כְּכֻלָּנוּ.

וַיַּעַן מַתְתִּיָּה אֲבֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם: אֲנִי
אֵצֶא עִמָּכֶם וְאֶלְחָם בְּעַמִּים, כֵּן יֵאבְדוּ בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאַתֶּם נִבְהַלְתֶּם עַל אַחֵיכֶם. וַיֵּצֵא
מַתְתִּיָּה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא עִם בְּנָיו וַיִּלְחֲמוּ
בְּעַמִּים. וְאֵלֶקִי הַשָּׁמַיִם נָתַן כָּל גִּיבוּרֵי
הָעַמִּים בְּיָדָם, וַיְהַרְגוּ בָּהֶם הָרַג רַב. כָּל
אֲחוּזֵי חֶרֶב, וְכָל מוֹשְׁכֵי קֶשֶׁת, שָׂרֵי הַחֵיל
וְהַסָּגָנִים, לֹא נֹתַר בָּהֶם שְׂרִיד. וַיָּנוּסוּ שְׂאֵר
הָעַמִּים לְמַדִּינֹת הָיִם.

TEXT

7

TALMUD
TRACTATE
SHABBAT, 21B

When the [Syrian] Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oil in the Sanctuary. When the Hasmoneans surged and defeated them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil with the undisturbed seal of the High Priest.

שְׁכַשְׁכְּנוּ יוֹנִים לְהִיכָל
טְמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים
שֶׁבַּהִיכָל. וְכִשְׁגְּבְּרָה
מַלְכוּת בֵּית חֲשִׁמוֹנָי
וְנִצְחוּם, בְּדָקוּ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ
אֶלָּא פֶּךָ אֶחָד שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן
שֶׁהָיָה מוֹנַח בְּחוֹתְמוֹ
שֶׁל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל.

TEXT

8

THE REBBE,
RABBI
MENACHEM
MENDEL
SCHNEERSON,
LIKUTEI SICHOT
15, P. 369

If one insists, one can argue that the Greeks missing a single cruse of oil was a natural occurrence, especially according to the opinion that the sealed cruse was buried in the ground, which is a rare phenomenon.

Moreover, since there was a dedicated chamber for oil storage, the enemy had no reason to search underground. Nevertheless, it is wondrous that the enemy found and defiled all the cruses, and this one cruse remained whole and untouched.

און אז מען וויל זיך איינשפארן קען
מען זאגן אז ס'איז געווען אן ענין
טבעי, אז דעם פך שמן האבן די
יוונים ניט באמערקט צו מטמא זיין.
ובפרט לדעת התוספות אז מ'מוז
זאגן "שהיה מונח בחותם בקרקע",
א דבר בלתי רגיל כלל. ובפרט אז
עס איז געווען א לשכת השמנים,
האבן די יוונים ניט געטראכט צו זוכן
דארט . . . אבער דאך איז עס א דבר
פלא: . . . אלע שמנים האבן די יוונים
מטמא געווען, און דער איין פך איז
(געווען באהאלטן בקרקע!) און
געבליבן גאנץ, ניט אנגערירט!

TEXT

9

TALMUD
TRACTATE
SHABBAT, 21B

There was only enough oil to light the menorah for one day. A miracle occurred and they lit [the menorah] from it for eight days. The next year the sages instituted these days as holidays with recitation of Hallel and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.

וְלֹא הָיָה בּוֹ אֶלָּא
לְהַדְלִיק יוֹם אֶחָד.
נַעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ נֶס וְהַדְלִיקוּ
מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמוֹנֶה יָמִים.
לְשָׁנָה אַחֲרֵת קִבְּעוּם
וַעֲשׂוּם יָמִים טוֹבִים
בְּהִלָּל וְהוֹדָאָה.

The miraculous Chanukah saga



Jews surprise and defeat the few soldiers in Modiin.

Greek army's defeat at the hands of the Maccabees.

The discovery of a single cruse of untouched oil.

One cruse of oil lasting for eight days and nights!

TEXT 10

*SIDDUR TEHILLAT
HASHEM,
ANNOTATED
EDITION
(BROOKLYN, N.Y.:
KEHOT, 2002), P.
390*

To offer gratitude and praise to your great name, for your miracles, your wonders, and your acts of saving.

להודות ולהלל לשמך
הגדול, על נסיך ועל
נפלאותיך ועל ישועותיך.

Question #2

Why does the prayer conclude by jumbling the order of miracles?

Why change to a different order at the end?



TEXT

11

THE REBBE,
RABBI
MENACHEM
MENDEL
SCHNEERSON,
LIKUTEI SICHOT
15, P. 369

First, we offer gratitude and praise for the miracles that everyone recognizes as divine.

We then reflect on the underpinning reality of some of the other remarkable events until we recognize them as divine wonders. Though one can argue erroneously that they are natural occurrences, we nevertheless learn to thank G-d for them.

Finally, we arrive at the recognition that G-d must be thanked and praised even for His acts of saving, which are not miraculous and not even wondrous, but seem like ordinary natural occurrences. This is because all salvation is in G-d's hands. Events of nature are also miraculous [because they are orchestrated by G-d]. Therefore, even such events must elicit gratitude and praise.

צום אלעם ערשטן איז מען מודה ומהלל דעם
אויבערשטן אויף "נסים", וואס אין דעם
דערקענען אלע אז דאס קומט פון אויבערשטן.

דערנאך איז מען זיך מתבונן ביז מען
דערקענט דעם אמת'ן גדר פון כמה וכמה
פאסירונגען אז זיי זיינען "נפלאותיך", כאטש
אז הרוצה לטעות יטעה — אז זיי זיינען
פאסירונגען בדרכי הטבע, און מען דאנקט און
לויבט דעם אויבערשטן פאר זיי.

און דערנאך קומט מען צו דער הכרה, אז
אפילו על ישועותיך — וועלכע זיינען ניט קיין
נס, און אפילו ניט קיין נפלאות, נאר אין גדרי
הטבע — דארף מען אויך דאנקען און לויבן
דעם אויבערשטן. ווארום — "לה' הישועה",
טבע אליין איז למעלה מן הטבע, ובמילא
דארף אויך א ישועה ארויסרופן א הודאה
והילול.

Answer #2

Why does the prayer conclude by jumbling the order of miracles?

The beginning of the prayer presents the events in chronological order.

The end tells us that the candles are lit to thank and praise G-d.



TEXT 12A

RABBI DOVBER
OF LUBAVITCH,
SHAAREI ORAH,
SHAAR PURIM
58A

That which is on the highest perch
descends to the lowest pit

כל הגבוה גבוה ביותר,
יורד למטה מטה ביותר.

TEXT 12B

THE REBBE,
RABBI
MENACHEM
MENDEL
SCHNEERSON,
LIKUTEI SICHOT
15, PP. 370–371

Miracles that are thinly veiled by nature (such as finding the untouched cruse of oil) emanate from a higher spiritual plane than open miracles (such as the logic-defying victories on the battlefield). And acts of G-d that are completely disguised as natural occurrences (such as the victory in Modiin) emanate from an even higher source.

[To explain:] Revealed miracles flow from divine energies that are restricted by a requirement of revelation; [unable to operate in disguise,] these miracles must be visible to all. Miracles that are thinly veiled by nature flow from divine energies that transcend this requirement and can, therefore, assume a natural guise.

די נסים וואס זיינען מלובש אין טבע,
האבן א העכערן שורש ווי די נסים
גלויים, און טבע אליין האט נאך א
העכערן שורש.

נסים גלויים נעמען זיך פון גילויים,
וואס זיינען מוגבל אין דעם קו פון
"גילוי" – דער נס מוז זיך זען בגילוי.
נסים המלובשים בטבע נעמען זיך פון
אן אור וואס איז העכער פון גילוי, און
דעריבער זיינען די נסים אנגעטאן אין
לבוש פון טבע. אבער פונדעסטוועגן,
וויבאלד דער "לבוש" איז אין אן אופן
וואס רופט ארויס א "וואונדער"
("נפלאות") ביי דעם וואס זעט עס, ביז
אז "נראה בחוש" ווי דאס איז "רק
למעלה מהטבע"

TEXT 12B

THE REBBE,
RABBI
MENACHEM
MENDEL
SCHNEERSON,
LIKUTEI SICHOT
15, PP. 370–371

Nevertheless, the fact that the veil is weak and those who observe it can peer through it and marvel over their supernatural quality demonstrates that these energies also belong in the category of the revealed.

Acts of saving that are completely disguised as natural occurrences (and thus present as lowly) flow from G-d Himself, who is not constrained by any requirements. Therefore, these supernatural events that come from G-d Himself can fully masquerade as natural occurrences.

איז פארשטאנדיק, אז דאס איז פון אן אור וואס איז על כל פנים בגדר גילוי. דוקא דער ענין פון "תשועות", וועלכע זיינען אנגעטאן אין טבע גופא, נעמט זיך פון עצמות וואס איז ניט בגדר גילוי כלל, ובמילא טוט זיך אויף די ישועה (שלמעלה מהטבע, וואס קומט פון דעם אויבערשטן אליין) אין אן אופן ווי עס וואלט זיך געפירט בדרך הטבע ממש.



Only the loftiest
miracles can assume a
disguise of nature.

*The less holy an event
appears, the holier it
really is!*

TEXT

13

THE REBBE,
RABBI
MENACHEM
MENDEL
SCHNEERSON,
LIKUTEI SICHOT
15, P. 371,
FOOTNOTE 31

Note that the Chanukah candles are kindled after sunset. Their purpose is specifically to light up the darkness, representing the teaching that G-d lights my darkness.

ולהעיר שנרות חנוכה
זמנם משתשקע החמה
— ענינם להאיר את
החושך דוקא . . . בחינת
"וה' יגיה חשכי".

“Their purpose is
specifically to light
up the darkness . . .”

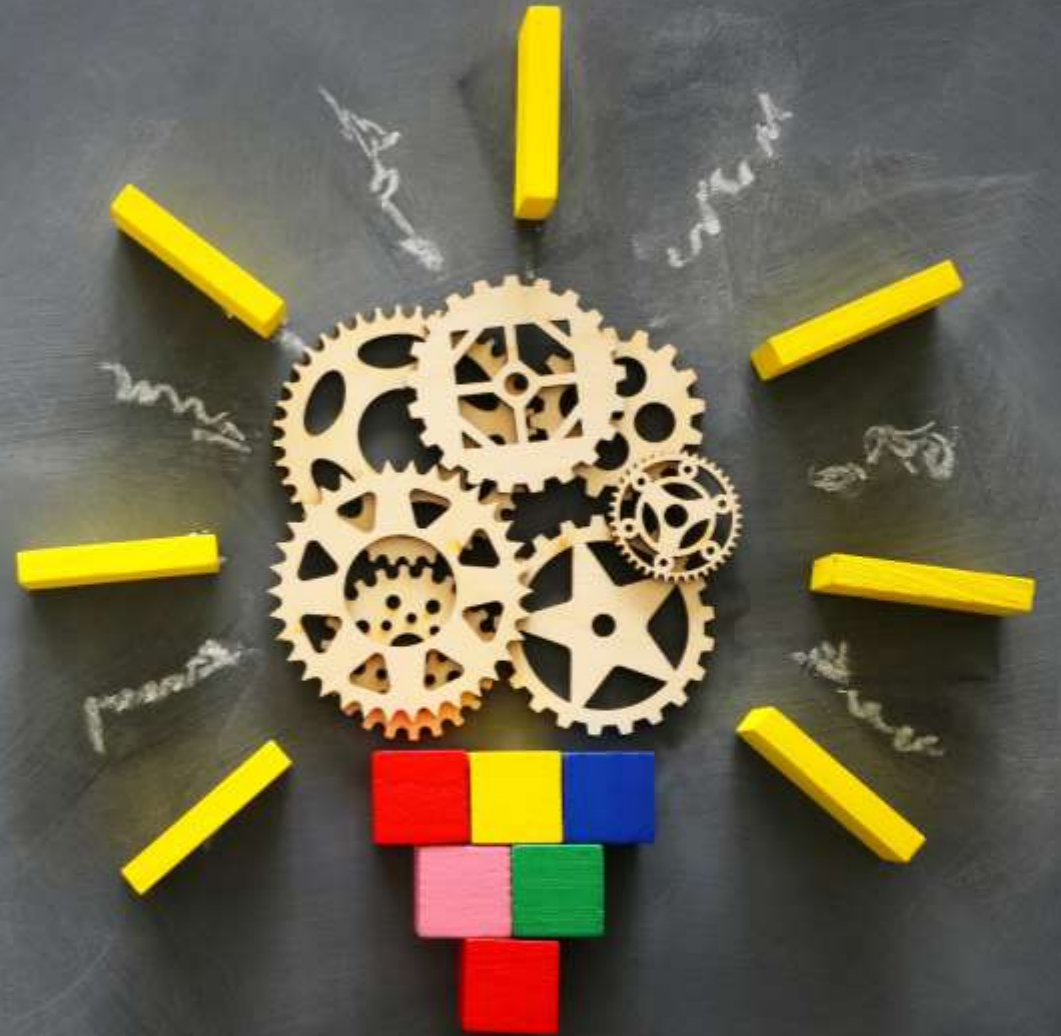
*—The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson*



Answer #1

Why is Chanukah celebrated differently?

Lighting a candle is the perfect way to thank G-d for a Chanukah saga that taught us not only that G-d was present, but that He is in fact most present in the darkness.





True to the Chanukah
theme of finding light
in darkness,

*we celebrate by lighting
candles rather than
chanting a Megillah.*

Next Week

Vayigash



**DON'T TELL ME ANYTHING
UNTIL I KNOW YOU CARE**

*Joseph's Master Class in
Effective Communication*

